Musical Symbolism in Bartók's *Bluebeard*: Trauma, Gender, and the Unfolding of the Unconscious

Elliott ANTOKOLETZ
University of Texas at Austin
2802 Horseshoe Bend Cove, Austin, Texas 78704-4531, U.S.A.
E-mail: antokoletz@mail.utexas.edu

(Received: 25 March 2006; accepted: 25 May 2006)

Abstract: The intention in this lecture is to explore the means by which Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* (1911) transforms the harmonic structures of the traditional major/minor scale system into a new musical language, and how this language reflects the psycho-dramatic symbolism of Béla Balázs, Hungarian disciple of the Belgian dramatist, Maurice Maeterlinck. In reaction to the realism of nineteenth-century theater, many authors began to develop a new interest in psychological motivation and a level of consciousness manifested in metaphor, ambiguity, and symbol. The Bartók–Balázs opera represents one of the first significant attempts to establish more profound correspondences between the symbolist dramatic conception and the new musical language. This language is based almost exclusively on interactions between pentatonic/diatonic folk modalities and their more abstract symmetrical transformations, the opposition of these two harmonic extremes serving as the basis for dramatic polarity between the characters as real-life beings and as instruments of fate. Also explored are the new musico-dramatic relations within larger historical, social, and aesthetic contexts. Distinguishing features are seen in the formulation of the new theoretical principles and how they serve to conjoin historical and cultural as well as philosophical and psychological issues within the operatic milieu.

Keywords: Béla Bartók, Béla Balázs, *Duke Bluebeard's Castle,* opera, symbolism

The creation of Claude Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande* (1893–1902) and Béla Bartók's *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* (1911) coincided with the beginnings of psychoanalysis and psychodynamic psychology – Maurice Maeterlinck, Achille-Claude Debussy, Béla Balázs, and Bartók, were contemporaries of Pierre Janet and Sigmund Freud. The latter two, as clinicians, discovered the psychological effects of traumatic events by listening to their patients and

Studia Musicologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae 47/3–4, 2006, pp. 279–292
DOI: 10.1556/SMus.47.2006.3-4.5
0039-3266/$ 20.00 © 2006 Akadémiai Kiadó, Budapest

trying to find a way to ameliorate their pain.[1] Although using different perspectives, both Freud and Janet viewed the unconscious as a realm that could be understood and rendered less destructive by awareness and new learning. Maeterlinck and Balázs, relying on the philosophical positions of the time, viewed the unconscious as part of fate, a universal will.[2]

Although enframed within the perspective of destiny, or the unconscious will, both the Maeterlinck and Balázs plays struggle with the notion of a self divided by contradictory impulses and driven by unconscious motivation. It is well known that Balázs exhibited a lifelong interest in psychological processes,[3] and that his writings suggest a keen awareness of the symbolic meaning of dreams. Even the journey inside Bluebeard's castle resembles a dream, a fact that is stressed in the original introduction to the play.

The rigidity of gendered social prescriptions at the time in which the Maeterlinck and Balázs plays were written leads to the development of psychological defenses that lock the protagonists in ongoing, mutually traumatizing interactions. These psychological interactions are inextricably connected with the notion that the characters in Maeterlinck's "static" theater (1889–1894) exist under the pervasive influence of fate. It is a world that is arbitrary and cruel, and in which the only certainty is death.[4] The protagonists move like sleepwalkers uprooted from a painful dream.[5] In *Duke Bluebeard's Castle*, Judith seems driven to a journey that leads her to a tragic end. The modern preoccupation with an inward look to the inner self is reflected in symbols, such as the dark castle and its closed doors. Although the manifest theme in both works appears to be a love story, the underlying themes reveal the contradictions in socially sanctioned gender roles and power differentials at the time in which the works were written.

The study of trauma often focuses on those aspects of events that defy their rendering in language, and music might be and often is an appropriate vehicle for the expression of the emotional sequela of tragic events. Both *Pelléas* and *Bluebeard* are tales of traumatic events as well as of traumatized people. The

[1] Both Janet and Freud had extensive training in philosophy and the classics as this was part of the graduate education of the time. Their theories about what they observed in their patients were informed by their knowledge in these areas. See Henri F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (New York: Basic Books, 1970), 209 and 337.

[2] See Susan Youens, "An Unseen Player: Destiny in *Pelléas et Mélisande*," in Arthur Groos and Roger Parker, *Reading Opera* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 60–66 and 88. See also Carl Leafstedt, *Inside Bluebeard's Castle* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 48.

[3] See Balázs, *Theory of the film,* 151, cited by Joseph Zsuffa, in *Béla Balázs, The Man and the Artist* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), chapter 1, note 5.

[4] Rainer Maria Rilke, "Maurice Maeterlinck," in *Oeuvres en prose, recits et essais,* Claude David (ed.) (Paris: Gallimard, 1993), 717.

[5] Maurice Maeterlinck, "Preface au théâtre de 1901," in P. Gorceix (ed.) *Oeuvres,* t. I (Bruxelles: Complexe, 1899), 495.

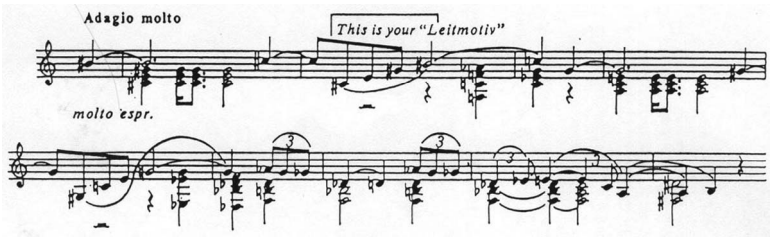
authors tell their tales in words, but they also acknowledge that words are incomplete vehicles for communicating the feelings and truths that their characters experience. It is in those states of being, in which language is not included, that art finds its tremendously compelling power.[6] The Symbolist use of language in both operas, in which meaning is not overtly expressed, offers an opportunity for the music to provide alternative narratives to what is left unsaid by the characters. Thus, it is no wonder that composers rushed to create music that would convey what the story line left unexpressed. The works are chosen because of their powerful depiction of gender conflicts and their traumatic resolution, as reflected in the verbal dialogue as well as the musical structure.

Autobiographical Significance, Trauma, and Fate

Whereas the internal concept of unconscious motivation seems to be represented primarily as an external one in the Maeterlinck play, in which human action is entirely controlled by fate, the *Bluebeard* opera libretto of Balázs projects perhaps an even more intense sense of unconscious interplay between the characters. The equivalence between unconscious motivation and the control by fate, that is, in the sense that the human being has no control over the hidden forces of the soul, is entirely relevant to psychological assumptions in *Bluebeard*. The magnetic attraction that the Balázs mystery play had for Bartók rather than Kodály at the 1910 reading of the play suggests yet another level of trauma that is associated with the composer himself. It is in this powerful attraction to the play's symbolism that we may glean an autobiographical significance for Bartók in his operatic setting, not only as reflected in his relation to his wives, that is, in his own divorce from Márta Ziegler in 1923 to marry another, much younger woman, Ditta Pásztory, but one that links the *Bluebeard* opera with Bartók's more explicit autobiographical references in virtually all of his works composed in 1908 and 1909. As is well known, both the early *Violin Concerto* and *Two Portraits* for orchestra are based on the same leitmotif, D-F♯-A-C♯, associated with the violinist Stefi Geyer with whom Bartók was in love. The *First String Quartet* opens with F-A♭-C-E, the minor-third modal variant of the chord as derived from the second movement of the Concerto. This form of the leitmotif came to symbolize what Bartók identified as his own "Funeral Dirge," when Stefi had

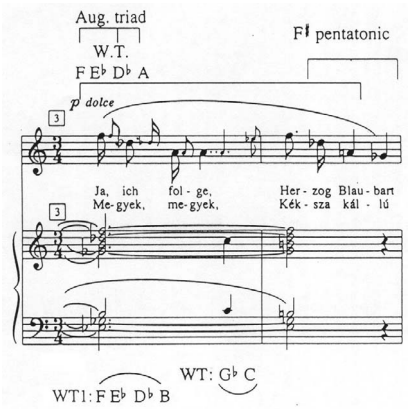
[6] See Balázs, 54. Stern's description of these states of being that co-exist with the verbal self and have nonverbal means of encoding and expressing experiences seems to validate the notion that music (probably more akin to the emergent self, which experiences rhythm and vitality) has its own syntax that is parallel to, but not identical to, language syntax. It is significant that Debussy's composition of *Pelléas et Mélisande* was a statement against Wagner's desire to integrate music and words in a common language.

rejected him in 1908. Bartók explicitly outlined and bracketed this minor-third modal form of Stefi's leitmotif in musical notation for her (*Example 1*).[7]

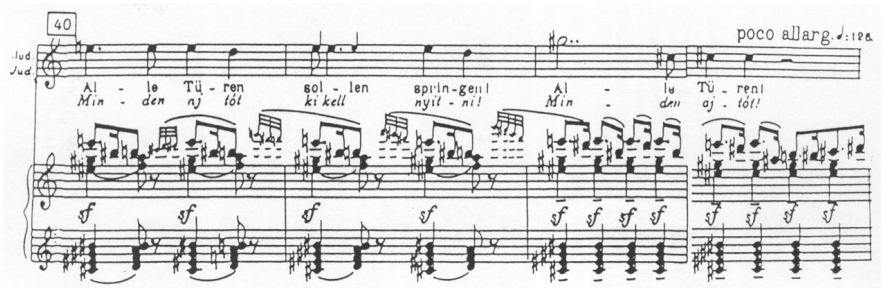


Example 1: Stefi Geyer's leitmotif in musical notation,
as outlined for her by Bartók in 1907 (*Béla Bartók Letters,* 87)

A rhythmic variant of Judith's opening fatalistic motif and its harmonization in the section that leads to the second door (the Armoury, at no. 40, near the end of the Torture Chamber) seem to identify Judith even more prominently with Stefi and the trauma associated with her rejection of him. At its first appearance (*Example 2*), we had found Judith's very opening melodic figure to outline one of the basic seventh-chord manifestations of Stefi's motif, G♭-A-D♭-F, that is, the minor-third modal form (in enharmonic spelling, F♯-A-C♯-E♯). As shown in *Example 3* (no. 40), the harmonic accompaniment to the rhythmic variant of Judith's fatalistic motif, which is also a variant of her "Danger" motif, is now based on unequivocal transpositions (precisely on the



Example 2: Judith's opening theme, no. 3, further infusion of whole-tone sphere
into F♯-pentatonic collection

[7] See Bartók's letter to Stefi Geyer, dated Wednesday, middle of September (1907), in János Demény (ed.), *Béla Bartók Letters* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1971), trans. Péter Balabán and István Farkas. Trans. rev. Elizabeth West and Colin Mason (London: Faber and Faber; Budapest: Corvina Press, 1971), 86–87. Example 1 will be discussed later, in connection with a different set of motivic associations relevant to the opening F♯-pentatonic theme.

Example 3: Ending of Torture Chamber scene, number 40, mm. 1–4, Judith's "Danger" motif, rhythmic variant of Judith's opening fatalistic motif and its harmonization based on C♯ transposition of major-third and minor-third modal forms of Stefi's motif, C♯-E♯-G♯-B♯ and C♯-E-G♯-B♯

C♯ transposition outlined in Bartók's letter) of both the major-third and minor-third modal forms of Stefi's motif, C♯-E♯-G♯-B♯ and C♯-E-G♯-B♯ (compare Example 3 with Example 1). In the context of the opera, the principal tones of Judith's opening vocal statement can be interpreted as a hybrid F♯-pentatonic/whole-tone construction (G♭-A-D♭-E♭-F), which outlines Bartók's "Funereal" form, that is, the minor-third modal variant of Stefi's leitmotif, G♭-A-D♭-F (in enharmonic spelling, F♯-A- C♯-E♯).

One of the underlying themes in the *Bluebeard* drama has to do with the irreconcilable differences between genders. It is therefore not surprising that this "Funereal" form of Stefi's leitmotif was to be used here as a focal point for the intrusion of the fatalistic whole-tone collection into the pentatonic/diatonic sphere of the opening "Castle" theme. It is striking that Bartók's mood associated with the minor-third modal variant of the leitmotif is one of "sad misgivings" and a lack of "any consolation in life save in music," a mood that portends the end of his relationship to Stefi.[8] Musically, the whole-tone collection (as the basis of the "Fate" motif in *Pelléas*) is the catalyst for transforming pentatonic/diatonic materials (i.e., motifs symbolizing characters as real-life beings) into more abstract symmetrical pitch constructions (i.e., motifs symbolizing characters as instruments of fate). This interaction of whole-tone and diatonic spheres also underlies the same dramatic symbolism in Bartók's opera.[9] Bluebeard's opening vocal sections are primarily pentatonic/diatonic, Judith's primarily whole-tone, Judith thus fatalistically intruding into Bluebeard's private life.

[8] Letter to Stefi Geyer, dated Wednesday, middle of September (1907), in *Béla Bartók Letters,* 87.

[9] See *Béla Bartók Essays,* ed. Benjamin Suchoff (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1976), 386, in which Bartók points to the influence of Debussy's recitative-styled opera (*parlando-rubato* rhythm) on his own. In this Harvard lecture, Bartók indicated an example from *Bluebeard's Castle* to show that "this kind of musical recitation is in a certain relation to that created by Debussy in his *Pelléas et Mélisande*…"

Prologue through Door I (Torture Chamber)

The musical fabric of *Bluebeard* is generated primarily by special "pitch-set" interactions as the basis for symbolic and dramatic expression.[10] The opening F♯-pentatonic set, F♯-A-B-C♯-E, a folk-derived diatonic substructure without semitones,[11] serves as the point of departure for the infusion of semitones as a representation of the emerging symbol of "Blood," and for transformation into the whole-tone sphere in connection with Judith's fatalistic intrusion into Bluebeard's private world.[12] His castle may be interpreted as a metaphor for the Man's soul, hence the identification of the opening F♯-pentatonic "Castle" or "Darkness" theme essentially with Bluebeard himself. These two dramatic aspects – the intrusion of "Fate" and the symbol of "Blood," which is induced by that intrusion both dramatically and by the corresponding musical pitch-set interactions – are closely interconnected as Judith's relentless prying opens the wounds of Bluebeard's soul.

In connection with the symbol of "Blood," combinations of semitones move from unobtrusive contexts, that is, as part of larger thematic statements to being the primary foreground event. In *Example 4*, the more general principle of expanding and contracting interval ratios is shown as part of a larger system suggested by the composer himself, in which he discussed the principle of diatonic "extension in range" of chromatic themes, and the reverse, chromatic "compression" of diatonic themes in connection with his own music.[13] The general tendency in the relation of pairs of semitones is toward chromatic compression and increasing dissonance, the most dissonant relation being the separation of two semitones by a semitone (ratio 1:1),[14] in association with the main dramatic idea of blood. The excerpt shown in *Example 5* – a prominent foreground statement of a four-note semitonal cell, G♯-A/A♯-B (at interval-ratio 1:1)[15] – occurs in the scene of the torture cham-

[10] These interactions are based almost exclusively on diatonic, whole-tone, and chromatic pitch-sets and their derivative subcollections or *intervallic cells.*

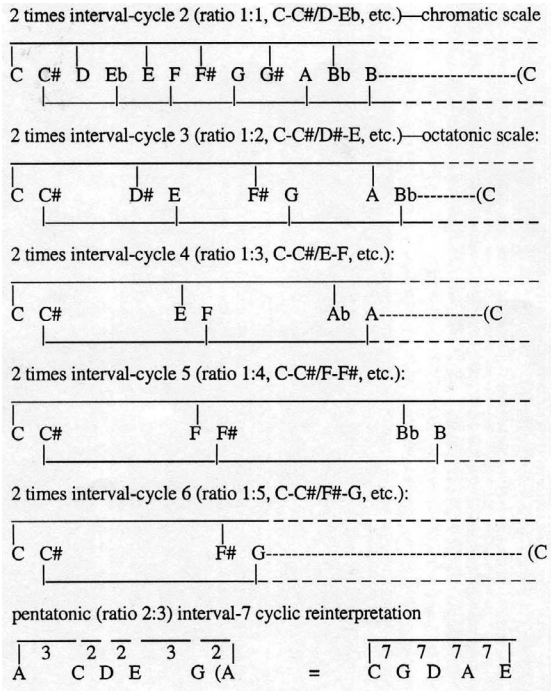
[11] In the Hungarian folk-music sources, the pentatonic scale always occurs in its (symmetrical) minor-mode form, as opposed to those permutations found, for instance, in Russian and Chinese sources; see Béla Bartók, *The Hungarian Folk Song,* ed. Benjamin Suchoff, trans. M. D. Calvocoressi (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1981), 17–18.

[12] Part of the following discussion of the relation between the semitonal "Blood" motif and the diatonic sphere is derived from Elliott Antokoletz, *The Music of Béla Bartók: A Study of Tonality and Progression in Twentieth-Century Music* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984), 89–93, "Bartók's *Bluebeard:* The Sources of Its 'Modernism,'" *College Music Symposium* 30/1 (Spring 1990): 79ff., and also *Musical Symbolism in the Operas of Debussy and Bartók: Trauma, Gender, and the Unfolding of the Unconscious* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

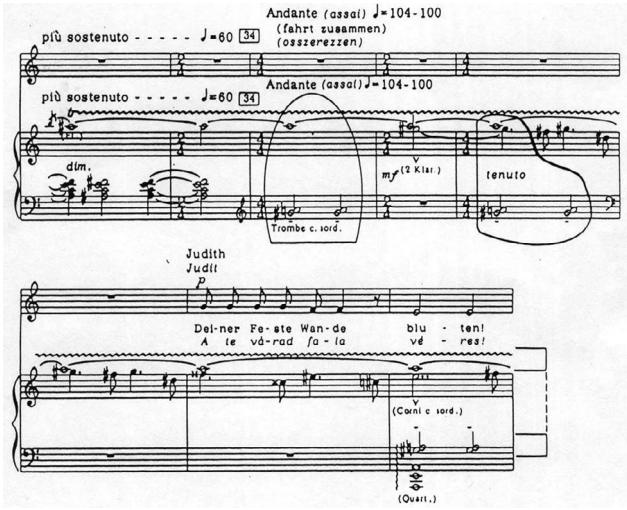
[13] Bartók, "Harvard Lectures," in *Béla Bartók Essays,* 381–383.

[14] The cyclic-interval implications in Example 4 have no relation to Ernő Lendvai's interval "models," which invoke "Golden Section" or "Fibonacci" proportions in the harmony.

[15] The first number refers to the two semitones that form the primary interval couple, G♯-A and A♯-B, the second number to the interval of their adjacency, in this case, semitone A/A♯).


2 times interval-cycle 2 (ratio 1:1, C-C#/D-Eb, etc.)—chromatic scale
C C# D Eb E F F# G G# A Bb B----------(C
2 times interval-cycle 3 (ratio 1:2, C-C#/D#-E, etc.)—octatonic scale:
C C# D# E F# G A Bb---------(C
2 times interval-cycle 4 (ratio 1:3, C-C#/E-F, etc.):
C C# E F Ab A----------(C
2 times interval-cycle 5 (ratio 1:4, C-C#/F-F#, etc.):
C C# F F# Bb B
2 times interval-cycle 6 (ratio 1:5, C-C#/F#-G, etc.):
C C# F# G---------- (C
pentatonic (ratio 2:3) interval-7 cyclic reinterpretation
3 2 2 3 2
A C D E G (A
=
7 7 7 7
C G D A E

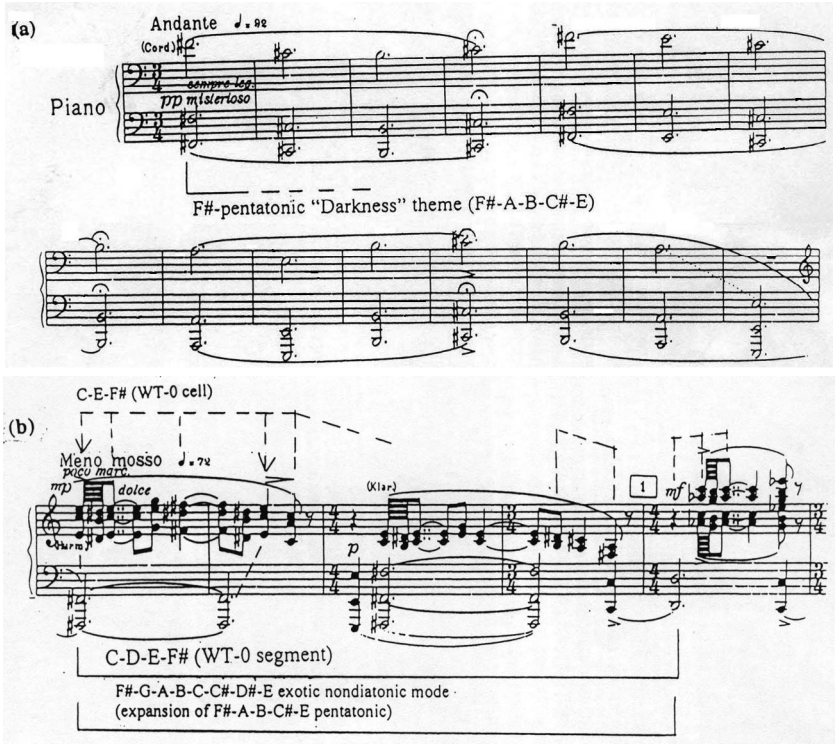
Example 4: Interval-ratio 1:1 system, interlocking compound cycles



Example 5: Torture Chamber, Section b1, no. 34f., main "Blood" motif occurrence

ber, the first of the seven doors to be opened by Judith. The text at this point reveals that Judith has just noticed blood in Bluebeard's domain (no. 34, mm. 5–6). This pair of semitones (G♯-A/A♯-B), the most dissonant relationship between two semitones, is divorced from any traditional modal construction.

The symbolism contained in the opening musical material portends Judith's character transformation and demise. The semitones of "Blood" begin to permeate the opening pentatonic framework as the fatalistic whole-tone sphere is introduced into the melodic and harmonic structure of the "Foreboding" motif. The opening F♯-pentatonic scale, F♯-A-B-C♯-E (*Example 6a*) implies the presence of a segment from each of the two whole-tone collections. The boundary (F♯-E) belongs to one of these collections, the central three notes (A-B-C♯) to the other. In the linear bass accompaniment of the "Foreboding" motif (see *Example 6b*), the cadential pentatonic dyad, E-F♯, is expanded to a four-note whole-tone tetrachord, C-D-E-F♯, a segment (C-[ ]-E-F♯) serving as

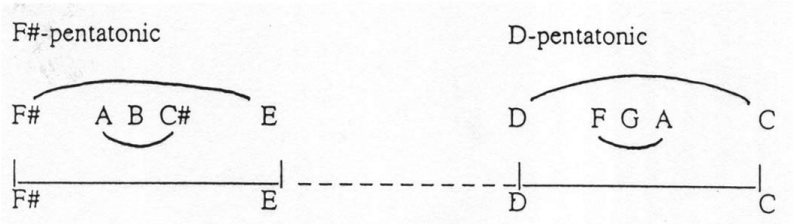


Example 6: Prologue, *(a)* mm. 1–16, opening F♯-pentatonic "Darkness" or "Castle" theme, in two pairs of four-note phrases or two larger eight-note pairings of archaic Hungarian isometric syllabic structure, *(b)* m. 16 through number 1 "Foreboding" motif, whole-tone expansion of cadential F♯-pentatonic dyad, E-F♯

the basic chord of the first phrase (mm. 16–17) as well as the embellished frame of the upper melodic line of the motif. The melodic cadence of the second phrase introduces a gapped segment (A-[ ]-C♯-D♯) from the other whole-tone scale. A transposition of the initial gapped cell (C-[ ]-E-F♯) produces a chromatic conflict with the primary whole-tone collection in the bass.[16] The priority of the primary whole-tone collection is re-established by the initial chord (A♭-C-D) of the next statement (no. 1).

These whole-tone segments (C-[ ]-E-F♯, or C-D-E-F♯, and A-[ ]-C♯-D♯), which are embedded in or accompany the "Foreboding" motif, also imply the presence of the A-Dorian/A-Lydian modes (A-B-[C-D-E-F♯]-G-A/[A]-B-[C♯-D♯]-E-F♯-[ ]-A). This polymodal combination supports the argument regarding the semitone ("Blood" motif) intrusions into the opening anhemitonic F♯-pentatonic "Castle" or "Darkness" motif by means of polymodal chromaticism. Thus, the basic pitch sets throughout the opera are already evident in this passage.

In Bluebeard's first complete phrase, the opening F♯-pentatonic collection is transposed to D-pentatonic. A special transpositional relationship between these two pentatonic collections, F♯-A-B-C♯-E and D-F-G-A-C (*Example 7*) implies the presence of certain fundamental pitch-set criteria for further intrusion of the whole-tone sphere and Judith's first statement (see Example 2, earlier). Specifically, the boundary whole-tone (F♯-E) of the original F♯-pentatonic collection is replaced by the new whole-tone boundary (D-C) of Bluebeard's D-pentatonic statement, both boundaries having unfolded jointly in the bass accompaniment to the "Foreboding" motif (mm. 16–21) as a whole-tone tetrachordal extension and transformation (C-D-E-F♯) of the F♯-pentatonic sphere. Thus, this primary whole-tone tetrachordal cell, which is also basic to the chordal structure of the motif, serves as a link between the



Example 7: Generation of whole-tone sphere from opening instrumental and vocal pentatonic themes: Bluebeard's D-pentatonic transposition of opening F♯-pentatonic in recitative style, showing components from both whole-tones cycles

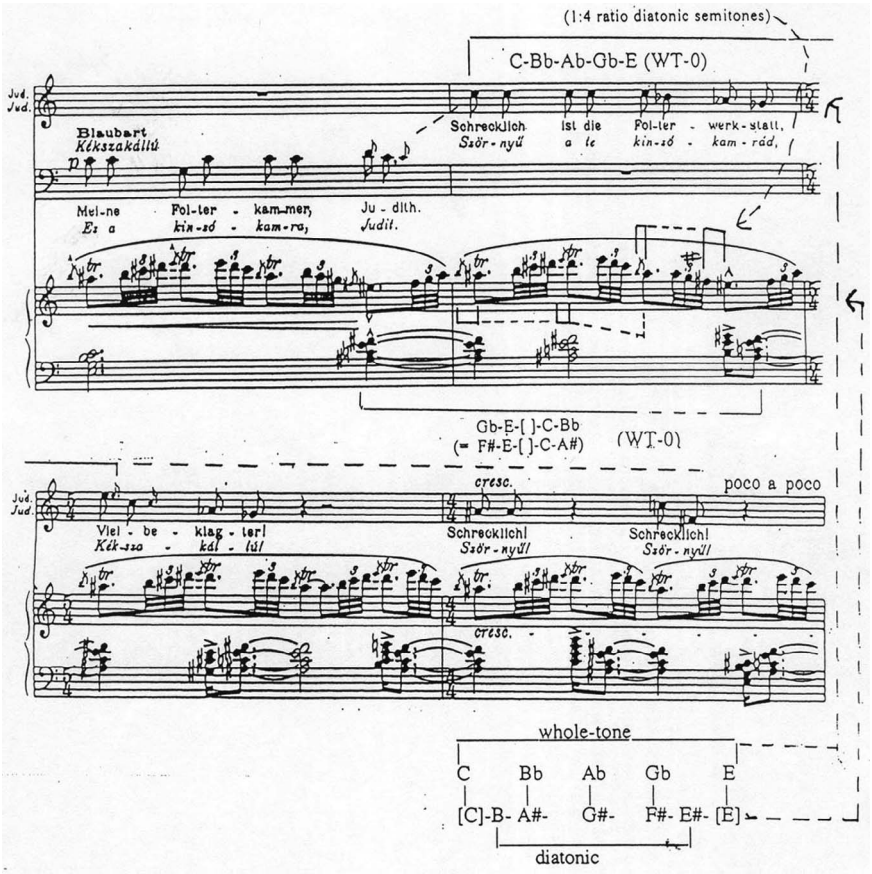
[16] We will refer to the initial whole-tone collection, WT-0, C-D-E-F♯-G♯-A♯ (or its enharmonic form, C-D-E-G♭-A♭-B♭), as "primary," the other whole-tone collection, WT-1, C♯-D♯-F-G-A-B (or its enharmonic form, D♭-E♭-F-G-A-B), as "secondary."

two pentatonic transpositions to establish one of the basic musical premises for the intrusion of fate into Bluebeard's world.

While Bluebeard unfolds his quiet D-pentatonic line, Judith responds to his questioning with a contrasting rhythmic and wide-ranging line at her words (no. 3), "I'm coming, Bluebeard, I'm coming" ("Megyek, megyek, Kékszakállú"), based on further infusion of the whole-tone sphere into the F♯-pentatonic collection. Her vocal statement (see Example 2 earlier) outlines a descending segment (F-E♭-D♭-A) belonging to the secondary whole-tone scale. The cadential Gb reveals the overlapping presence of the F♯-pentatonic triad (in enharmonic spelling, G♭-A-D♭), so the basic F♯-pentatonic collection is partially transformed, by the raising of its seventh degree (E to F), into a hybrid whole-tone/pentatonic formation, G♭-A-D♭-E♭-F (i.e., F♯-A-C♯-E♭- F) at Judith's first utterance. The new major-seventh boundary (G♭-F), implying a semitone intrusion into Bluebeard's pentatonic world, is a significant intervallic anticipation of the "Blood" motif. Thus, while the respective boundary whole-steps (F♯-E and C-D) from the F♯-pentatonic and D-pentatonic collections were jointly manifested as a segment (C-D/E-F♯) from the primary whole-tone collection, Judith's whole-tone segment (especially the augmented-triad A-D♭-F) from the secondary whole-tone collection is an enharmonic manifestation of the internal whole-tone segments (A-[ ]-C♯ and F-[ ]-A) of the F♯-pentatonic and D-pentatonic scales, respectively. Thus, the whole-tone world of Judith is already fatalistically ensnaring the pentatonic world of Bluebeard's soul.

Door I (Torture Chamber)

The components of the semitonal tetrachord appear with increasing prominence and systematic intervallic compression (according to Example 4) in correspondence with the growing awareness of blood.[17] As the opening of the first door (Torture Chamber; no. 30ff.) produces a blood-red gap in the wall, the trilled semitone A♯-B appears as a dissonant element against the partially diatonic figurations. This semitone (at no. 33) is briefly diatonicized as part of the scale figures, A♯-B-C♯-D♯-E, and its inversion, B-A♯-G♯-F♯-E♯ (*Example 8*). The basic A♯-B forms an interval ratio of 1:4 with each of the other two diatonic semitones (A♯-B/D♯-E and E♯-F♯/A♯-B). Then, at the main dramatic focal point of the symbol of "Blood," (no. 34; see Example 5 earlier), semitone A♯-B is dissociated from the latter diatonic context and joined with the other basic semitone, G♯-A, to form the dissonant 1:1 tetrachordal cell, G♯-A/A♯-B.

[17] For an outline of these occurrences, see Sándor Veress, "Bluebeard's Castle," in Béla Bartók: *A Memorial Review* (New York: Boosey and Hawkes, 1950), 45–49.

Example 8: Torture Chamber, number 33ff., trilled semitone A♯-B of "Blood" motif in diatonic interval-ratio 1:4 with two other boundary semitones (A♯-B/D♯-E and E♯-F♯/A♯-B), chromatic conflict produced by diatonic and whole-tone segments in symmetrical overlap

The derivation of an abstract chromatic intervallic cell from traditional modal formations contributes to the expression, direction, and integration of the drama.

The local process by which the intervallically-contracted chromatic "Blood" motif or cell (G♯-A-A♯-B) emerges from the diatonic interval structure of the preceding figuration (as shown in Example 8) is a reflection of the same macroscopic process that has been developing toward this focal point since the beginning of the opera. Whereas the "Foreboding" motif (mm. 16ff.) had begun partially to fill in the anhemitonic gaps of the opening pentatonic "Castle" theme, the shrill figuration (nos. 33–34) leading directly to the

"Blood" motif represents a complete and systematic manifestation of this filling-in principle. A special symmetrical intervallic relation unfolds between vocal lines and accompanying diatonic figuration. This relation provides the means for fusing diatonic, whole-tone, and chromatic spheres at this significant point of intervallic compression. While Judith's vocal line exclusively produces a whole-tone transformation of both D-pentatonic (implied by Bluebeard's perfect fourths, D-G-C) and F♯-pentatonic (represented by Judith's cadential figure ending on Gb, i.e., to imply a whole-tone mutation, E-C-A♭/G♭, of Judith's original hybrid whole-tone/pentatonic motif, F-D♭-A/G♭), the orchestral figurations produce systematic semitonal intrusions into Judith's whole-tone line. The two alternating diatonic orchestral figures, A♯-B-C♯-D♯-E, and its inversion, B-A♯-G♯-F♯-E♯, both contain axial whole-tone trichords, B-C♯-D♯ and A♯-G♯-F♯, respectively. The first trichord produces a chromatic conflict with Judith's whole-tone vocal line (C-B♭-A♭-G♭-E) and, furthermore, complements Bluebeard's cadential WT dyad, C-D, to imply the presence of a chromatically filled symmetry, B-[C]-C♯-[D]-D♯.

The symmetrical processes continue. The diatonic boundary notes, A♯ and E, of the first diatonic orchestral figure also imply an extension of Bluebeard's cadential dyad (C-D) to a WT tetrachord, A♯-C-D-E, this dyad and Judith's vocal line together forming the complete WT scale (D-C-B♭-A♭-G♭-E). The axial trichord of the second, inverted diatonic orchestral figure, A♯-G♯-F♯, duplicates Judith's axial whole-tone trichord (in enharmonic spelling, B♭-A♭-G♭). At the same time, the boundary notes, B-E♯, of the second diatonic segment (B-A♯-G♯-F♯-E♯) map chromatically and symmetrically into Judith's whole-tone line, C-[B]-B♭-A♭-G♭-[E♯]-E, precisely between the two whole-steps (C-B♭ and G♭-E) that are also vertically projected to form the reiterated "French-sixth" chord (in enharmonic spelling, A♯-C-E-F♯). The "Blood" motif (B-A♯-A-G♯) descends within this minor-sixth boundary (C-E) and is extended further downward to F𝄪 (B-A♯-A-G♯-F𝄪). Judith's line also unfolds within this boundary. Such half-step intrusions into the whole- tone sphere are anticipated in Judith's initial vocal statements (no. 32f.), where her whole-tone-related boundary, E-C (no. 33), is adjoined by half-steps to produce an octatonic, or interval-ratio 1:2 segment, E-E♭/D♭-C. The latter chromatic complementation of the combined descending whole-tone line of Judith and the inverted diatonic orchestral figure (C-[B]-B♭-A♭- G♭-[E♯]-E) is further chromaticized, then, by the "Blood" motif (G♯-A-A♯-B), significantly in descending order: the trill-figure B-A♯ appears first, to which is added A-G♯ (no. 34), then F𝄪, etc., in the "drip-

ping" dotted figure of the clarinet. Judith's vocal line (through the "Tranquillo") moves entirely within the ambitus of this descent.

Epilogue

The transformation of the more linear, defined quality of the traditional major/minor scales into the more diffuse, static effects created by the use of symmetrical (whole-tone) pitch-set interactions versus pentatonicism, modality, and polymodality resonated with the modernistic conception of the human being, who is perennially divided and threatened by the split between the conscious and the unconscious mind. The symbolic connotation of symmetrical pitch relations has similarities with Matte Blanco's concept of "the unconscious as infinite sets."[18] Matte Blanco's work is an attempt to provide a more precise description of what Freud alluded to when he stated that "the dreamwork is not simply more careless, more irrational, more forgetful, and more incomplete than waking thought, it is completely different from it qualitatively and for that reason not immediately comparable with it."[19] In the unconscious, two objects may be represented by or equated to each other because they have accidental rather than essential similarities, or because they are juxtaposed. In the conscious mind, which is ruled by Aristotelian logic, objects are equated only in essential ways when they belong to the same class.

In this study of the Balázs–Bartók symbolist opera, meaning is generally inferred by rules that follow the system of the unconscious. Beyond that, the text narratives are impacted by the ideological trends of the time, not only in what they say, but also in what they omit. Both the Debussy and Bartók operas have symbolic meanings that must be decoded. In giving a voice to what is left unsaid, the hope is to have gained additional insights into what the *Bluebeard* opera, like Debussy's *Pelléas*, reveals about human interactions and the historical moment in which these works emerged.

[18] Ignacio Matte Blanco, *The Unconscious as Infinite Sets: An Essay in Bi-Logic* (London: Duckworth, 1975).

[19] Sigmund Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams," *Standard Edition* 5 (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), 509.